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# Opposition short of one vote to prevent govt from taking oath

## 32 MPs to boycott Assembly session, call on prime minister to resign

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** Thirty-two lawmakers yesterday said they will boycott the National Assembly session tomorrow to prevent the new Cabinet from taking the oath of office, just one vote short of preventing the Assembly from meeting. For the session to be legal, an absolute majority of members - 33 - must attend the session, and so far opposition MPs said they have guaranteed that 32 lawmakers will not attend the session. If one more member joins the opposition boycott, the Assembly will not be able to meet.

Not holding the session will prevent the 16-

member Cabinet, including H.H. the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, from taking the oath to become members of the Assembly. If ministers do not become members of the Assembly, they will not be able to attend sessions, which is a prerequisite for Assembly sessions to be legal. A similar incident happened in 1964, when a majority of MPs refused to attend the Assembly session and prevented Cabinet members from taking the oath. That forced the Cabinet to resign.

Opposition MPs met again yesterday and issued a brief statement in which they assured they will boycott the session because Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had insisted that the membership of lead-

ing opposition MP Bader Al-Dahoum is "null and void". Following the meeting, Dahoum said 32 MPs have pledged they will boycott the session tomorrow in a bid to prevent the government from taking the oath. He called on people to press other MPs to join the boycott.

Dahoum warned that lawmakers who will attend the session will allow the Cabinet to take the oath and will give confidence to the prime minister and speaker, adding that people are demanding the departure of both of them.

Pressure is mounting on social media on five tribal MPs - four of them from the Awazem tribe, of which Dahoum is a member. One of them, MP

Ahmad Al-Shuhoumi, the deputy speaker, said he will attend the session even if he is the only member present. Other lawmakers have made no comment so far. MP Saifi Al-Saifi said the government is illegitimate from constitutional, popular and legal viewpoints and the premier must go.

Meanwhile, Ghanem yesterday sent out invitations to lawmakers to attend the session tomorrow, the first since June 5. The session, if it convenes, is scheduled to discuss a number of important laws, including the general amnesty law, mainly for opposition activists and former MPs. The Assembly is also due to discuss two grillings against the prime minister.

## Iraq returns archives stolen from Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait received yesterday eight tons of documents and other items taken during the 1990 Iraq invasion led by Saddam Hussein, officials said. It is the third shipment that Kuwait has received since 2019, according to officials from both countries. Kuwait's assistant foreign minister Nasser Al-Hain welcomed the move, saying the shipment contained archives from Kuwait University, the information ministry and other institutions.

"We look forward to more cooperation and, God willing, there will soon be additional steps to complete the handover," he said during a ceremony marking the occasion in Kuwait City. Qahtan Al-Janabi, from Iraq's foreign ministry, said that his

country had previously received a list of missing items from Kuwait and "based on that, the handover is taking place".

In response to a question about Kuwaiti authorities finding the remains of an Iraqi soldier on Boubyan island, Hain said that the interior ministry had taken the necessary measures in this regard, adding the remains of the Iraqi soldier will be handed over to the Iraqi delegation by Janabi before it leaves Kuwait tomorrow.

Iraqi forces, under ex-dictator Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait on Aug 2, 1990, sparking international condemnation, and occupying the state for seven months before they were pushed out by a US-led international coalition. Baghdad has paid around \$50 billion in the last three decades in reparations, but faced with its worst fiscal crisis in years amid the coronavirus pandemic and plummeting oil prices, it has asked for an extension for the final \$3.8 billion. While the countries now have civil relations, issues remain over borders and the repatriation of bodies. — Agencies



**KUWAIT:** Information Ministry official Essam Al-Said inspects boxes in the back of a truck containing Kuwaiti archives seized during the Iraqi invasion in 1990, after their return by Iraqi authorities yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

## Suicide attack on cathedral in Indonesia



**MAKASSAR, Indonesia:** An anti-terror policeman stands guard as police seal the area after an explosion outside a church yesterday. — AFP

**JAKARTA:** The suicide bombing at an Indonesian cathedral on Palm Sunday was carried out by two members of a pro-Islamic State extremist group blamed for other church blasts, including a deadly 2019 attack in the Philippines, police said. About 20 worshippers were injured by the powerful explosion outside the church in Makassar city on Sulawesi island as they celebrated the start of Holy Week.

Both suspects in the attack were killed as they rode a motorbike into the compound of the church, setting off what authorities said was an improvised explosive device known

as a pressure-cooker bomb. A church security guard tried to prevent the two perpetrators from entering when the blast occurred, they added.

Late yesterday, National Police chief Listyo Sigit Prabowo said both attackers - a man and a woman - were members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an extremist group also blamed for a deadly church bombing in Indonesia's second-biggest city Surabaya in 2018. Prabowo did not give names or say how they were identified, but forensic examiners were performing

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## Deaths in Egypt building collapse climb to 25

**CAIRO:** Egyptian state media said yesterday that at least 25 people were killed in a 10-storey building collapse in Cairo the day before, revising the toll up as rescue operations continued. Al-Ahram newspaper said the number of injured in Saturday's incident in the capital's eastern Gesr Suez district rose to 75. Rescue workers continued to sift through cement and rubble yesterday, a security source said.

Al-Ahram quoted local reports as claiming four of the building's floors had been added illegally.

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**CAIRO:** People and rescuers gather around the rubble of a building that collapsed in Gesr Suez, east of the Egyptian capital, on Saturday. — AFP

## Taste and smell gone: Anguish of COVID survivors

**NEW YORK:** Three days after testing positive for COVID-19, "everything tasted like cardboard", recalls 38-year-old Elizabeth Medina, who lost her sense of taste and smell at the start of the pandemic. A year later, she fears she will never get them back. Medina consulted ear, nose and throat doctors and neurologists, tried various nasal sprays, and is part of a group of patients undergoing experimental treatment that uses fish oil.

To try to stimulate her senses, she puts copious amounts of spices on everything she eats, pours aromatic herbs into her tea and regularly sniffs a bracelet soaked in essential oils. But her attempts have been in vain. Medina, a guidance counselor at

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**NEW YORK:** Elizabeth Medina smells her hand after using hand sanitizer during an interview outside NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital on March 22, 2021. — AFP